DOCUMENT RESUME

RC 006 341

ED 065 260

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TITLE	Education's Outer Space.
PUB DATE	[71]
NOTE	12p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Camping; *Conservation Education; Ecology; *Environmental Education; *Outdoor Education; Program Costs; *Program Descriptions; *Resident Camp Programs; Special Education; Staff Utilization

ABSTRACT

Information collected from 81 camps, schools, and colleges concerning outdoor environmental facilities and program changes taking place in outdoor education is presented in this paper. Included in this information are descriptions of sites, duration of programs, suggested seasons, cost and financing, camp organization, program activities, age levels, special programs, staffing procedures, and college leadership in environmental education. Conclusions drawn from the study are that the trend to study outdoors is increasing, that there is a tendency to relate outdoor learning to indoor learning and to include all areas of the curriculum, and that colleges recognize the need for relating theory to practice and the necessity of crossing departmental lines to study environmental problems. (PS)

ED 065260

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EDUCATION'S OUTER SPACE

by

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[1971]

The stream was in Maryland but the children could have been from anywhere. I had seen that wonderful expression in at least twenty-five states. They all stood in the icy water well above their shoe tops selecting specimens from the creek bottom. But it was that, "Hey, look what I found," look in their faces and the excitement sparking from their eyes that quickened my pulse.

The resource person, a county science consultant, shook his head and waded ashore. "They're not just reading about it, they are seeing it happen. Yes, and feeling, hearing and smelling it, too." He hesitated to help a student identify salamander eggs then continued. "This is where the action is." He dipped a handful of water and pointed at the surrounding forests. "Where education really is."

We were standing on this stream bank, watching retentive learning take place, because I had asked these questions. Are outdoor schools still a vital part of American education? Are

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programs that I knew still operating? More important, what trends are developing in program, staff, financing and organization? What leadership are colleges giving? What is the relationship between these programs and the current concern over environmental study?

These questions had been weighing heavily on my thoughts for some time so I requested a leave to study outdoor environmental facilities and program changes taking place across this country. I hoped to use this information to further develop an environmental education program I had been working on and to hone and polish an environmental based curriculum for children.

My husband, a free-lance writer, and I bought a twenty-two foot motorhome which provided transportation, lodging, and an office for the project. The study didn't cost you or the tax paying public a penny --- this, of course, is just another way of saying that we tried but couldn't float a state or federal grant. The expenses were paid out of our pocket. I made contacts, interviewed educators at the schools, and wrote follow-up letters. My husband did the driving, took care of mechanical problems and made 800 slides of activities, facilities and key persons, and worked up a few short stories in his spare time.

To discover and swat some of the unanticipated bugs, several short trial runs were made. Smaller districts, within easy driving distance of the San Francisco and some Pacific Northwest schools were selected for these preliminary trips.

One important conclusion was obvious during these early test runs; large numbers of students were being touched <u>favorably</u> by school camping. Other things were noted, too. Fine leadership

in the form of workshops, bulletins of information exchange and printed material was being given by the United States Forest Service in Portland, specifically by Ernie MacDonald. However the colleges appeared to be assisting comparatively little except to give extension credit for some workshops. Occasional courses were offered by University of Wahington, Oregon State University and University of Southern Oregon, Washington State College at Ellensberg. These early study trips were so productive, however, we found it difficult to wait for the starting date.

PLANNING THE ITINERARY

To plan an itinerary I used my own knowledge of programs, Freebergs' Philosophy of Outdoor Education, 1968, Julian Smith's Newsletter, the Northern Illinois University publication, Outdoor Education, Bud Wiener's sabbatical material, the Northwest Region Forest Service Conservation Vistas, and information from Fred Partridge, Director of ~~[illegible]~~ Clear Creek School, Long Beach.

Dean Orohood, now director of the San Joaquin County, California outdoor education program, was much help. Two years earlier, he had made a similar trip in a camper van accompanied by his wife. His tapes, methods and itinerary helped considerably in our planning. Both Orohood and I quickly learned that the best way to get in depth information was to make informal visits with the staffs. A few well directed, open ended questions would invariably bring an erupting barrage of enthusiastic and constructive answers.

Somebody circled the world in "Eighty Days", but we concluded that he could never have done it if he had been calling on outdoor schools. In 270 days we travelled 19,821 miles and We visited eighty-one camps, schools, colleges, etc.

having to do with outdoor and/or environmental education, and talked to people from other programs. Following are some of our observations.

SITES

Campsites used for resident schools are rarely owned by school districts. There are a few camps operated by colleges. But usually they are agency sites such as church or scout camps that are not used during the school week. Some group camps are on park or forest land. In only a few cases the children set up primative camps, perhaps because the general feeling is that camp skills are part of the recreation program rather than curriculum related.

DURATION

Lengths of time varied from day trips to two weeks. One highly successful experience lasted through four weeks of summer school. This consisted of one week preparation in the school building, one week at the mountain outdoor site, one week back in school for evaluation and additional preparation, then another week back at the outdoor site. The general opinion of school personnel was that too short a stay didn't give children time to settle down. But it was also felt, by experienced outdoor teachers, that two weeks would be too fatiguing and difficult for the staffs. However, classroom teachers after one week camps, often expressed a desire for a second week.

THE BEST SEASON

Most teachers prefer Spring for long range outdoor experiences. There are many reasons. Some camps are not winterized. Those that are prepared for the cold often experience difficulty in staffing. Teachers who took their classes to camp in the fall,

however, often favor it. Winter also offers many possibilities not available in other seasons.

There is a plus to Fall and Winter camping that is often overlooked. The informal outdoor experience seems to weld a closer relationship and cooperation with the children that lasts the full school year. In California outdoor education is frequently part of the Summer school program. More than half the programs we visited were year round with a permanent staff.

COST AND FINANCING

The cost of one week at an outdoor school ranged from fifteen to thirty-five dollars for each student. Expenses were usually paid by the parents, but in some states school boards often pay all or a part of the costs of instruction, this is about half the total and leaves the board and room cost up to the parents.

Earning the money became part of the learning for many classes. Scholarships were provided by P. T. A., Rotary Clubs, Dad's Clubs and other service organizations. Sometimes federal programs paid the costs for inner city children.

ORGANIZATION

Group sizes vary greatly but one hundred was the average, usually three to four classes. When there were two or three hundred students at the same facility they were always divided into two or three branch units; about one hundred in each unit.

Students from different classrooms and schools were mixed. Trail groups ranged in size from twelve to thirty. However, thirty young people on one night hike proved to be a bit much.

PROGRAM

Over a hundred different activities were observed and photgraphed. Emphasis varied. California programs stressed science. Texas Washington and Michigan emphasized social science. In every case conservation was taught.

Terrain influenced programs. Most mountain camps were quite similar in that they featured forest ecology. Those at Tyler, Texas and Clear Lake, Michigan were on small lakes surrounded by farms and therefore included agriculture in their programs. Eastern camps involved more nature study and creative expression. To me this indicates that with classroom and camp teacher cooperation, the whole curriculum can be taught outdoors.

AGE LEVEL

The sixth grade has always seemed to be the optimum grade level. This will probably always be the most managable age group. It is an age when everything they see is wonderful and exciting. It is also an age when the opposite gender is only beginning to be important.

All this still considered, we noticed a new and healthy trend in the grade level of school camping. We saw programs at all grade levels, K - 12, working effectively. It was obvious that this idea will continue to expand.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

High School Programs

Many outdoor programs use high school students in different capacities. But programs designed for the high school class, as a whole, are appearing at a sound rate. For example;

In California there are the Jefferson High School, Daly City

Wilderness School and Los Angeles City High Schools. There were other programs such as Shoreline, Washington, Tyler, Texas high schools weekend programs and the Phoenix Union High School classes that study ecology with graduate students from the Arizona State University camp.

We found outdoor resident schools used in various types of special education. One example in California was the Santa Cruz County Schools. They used horticulture and animal husbandry in a program for mentally retarded high school and adult students. These students benefit in three ways through counselling, the workshop and the farm. Farm and workshop time is used to reward normal behavior. Pay is also given. These pay periods are lengthened to teach patience.

A similar reenforcement system was witnessed at Escalon School in Pasadena. Mentally disturbed children were rewarded with tokens which could be cashed for Blue Chip stamps. As further reward, these children were taken on one week camp trips.

Bradford Woods at Martinsville, Indiana and one of the camps at Little Grassy Lake in Southern Illinois are primarily for special education students. These programs are conducted by credential candidates. The Battle Creek Outdoor Education Center has children from special education schools each Spring for two one-week sessions. The program and menus are adjusted as slightly as necessary. Often the camp's permanent staff find it difficult to pick out these special education students.

SCHOOL GARDENS

Ten years ago there was a high interest in school gardening.

But gradually this interest waned. But it appears that this curve has bottomed and is turning up, apparently influenced by the current emphasis on ecology.

Monlux Science Center in Los Angeles was converting to resource materials and demonstrations because of the lack of teacher interest in gardening. This despite excellent units that had been developed. But the children lacked teacher motivation and became beholders rather than diggers.

At Camp Tyler in Texas, a small school garden awaited staff urging and motivation before the students became part of the action. At the Battle Creek Center a farm adjacent to the camp was cultivated by enthusiastic children and teachers. In this Michigan outdoor school, the classroom teachers had done their job well.

STAFF

The usual outdoor school staff was composed of a director or principal, about four resident teachers, the teachers accompanying the classes and several college students, usually student teachers. High school students often serve as cabin counsellors and help with recreation and dining hall. Besides the instructional staff, the established camp furnished one to three cooks and a custodian.

The difference between viable programs with community support and those struggling for financial survival was strikingly proportionate to the amount of classroom and pupil. The communities seem to back enthusiastically the programs in which the teachers assist the children in the planning and carrying out the activities. When a single preplanned schedule was imposed on all groups by the outdoor resident staff, the programs seemed to drag and be

mechanical.

PREPARATION

In our discussions with the camp staff members their questions reflected their concerns. They wanted to know how to get the classroom teachers to plan more beforehand. Often, however, when they did, the resident teachers were upset by the deviation from the program. They wondered how other outdoor staffs handled the routine. Should teachers eat with the children? What learning occurs through campfire skits? How can college and nigh school students best be used? There is a growing concern about the influence of "way out" volunteers from the colleges.

THE LEADERSHIP OFFERED BY THE COLLEGES

Leadership affects programs. Julian Smith, Michigan State University, through AAHPER greatly influences the middle United States. These programs are more apt to involve pupil planning and the total curriculum. Because Western leaders seem to fear the word "recreation", science has become the learning core. Much leadership training in the West comes through the Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education.

The Southern Illinois University has understandably retained L. B. Sharp's discovery teaching, expanded it and introduced many young and exciting methods on its own. The University of Indiana's value philosophy penetrates the Association of Outdoor Education and the American Camping Association. What started at the University of Michigan with Richard Weaver's desire to relate conservation and teacher education is being expanded into a school of environmental education by Bill Stapp.

At Northern Illinois University, Michigan State University and Glassboro, New Jersey we interviewed Canadian Students who will direct leadership in Canada.

Interns and student teachers usually in teaching roles, were part of the teaching staff at almost all the outdoor education centers. At Camp Union in New Hampshire the interns were the teaching staff for an entire term. They earned six to eight units of credit, contacting their campus advisors by telephone. One week only for student teachers was more common , however.

Many colleges across the whole country furnished these interns and students. And distance wasn't always a detering factor. We found students as far as twenty-five hundred miles from their home campus.

Departments of environmental education were found at the University of Waterloo, Ontario (by report); University of Rhode Island; California State College at Bakersfield, University of Michigan, Northern Illinois University, Southern Illinois University and Prescott, Arizona.

In environmental education it seemed much easier to find masters degrees offered than undergraduate work. Even these were relatively new, and often supported by federal grants. They had substantial enrollments. The only doctorates found were offered at the University of Michigan and Indiana University. However, many in service courses were offered.

Colleges with their own field campuses, conducting programs for both teachers and children were Pennsylvania State College (Stone Valley), Southern Illinois University (Little Grassy Lake), University of Wyoming (Lander), Anitoch College (Glen Ellen)

San Francisco State College (Camp Leonard), Arizona State College (Tantozona), University of Indiana (Bradford Woods), NewJersey State Colleges (School of Conservation), University of Rhode Island and Michigan State University (Higgins Lake). However, full time jobs in environmental education were becoming scarce.

We found colleges involved in most of the programs. Some in neighboring programs with both feet, while others were just experimentally dipping one toe. But as has always been true in outdoor education, those doing the most are bragging the least. Very often it is one college faculty member who leads and boot-straps this participation. I knew some and met many more on this trip.

CONCLUSIONS

The Cambodian crisis came on the heels of Earth Day and closed most of the Ohio and New England colleges we planned to visit. Along with concern about Vietnam, racial tensions and campus upset, college students were concerned about the enviroment and related environmental concerns to the others. Also, at this point the Office of Education announced its new Division of Environmental Education and the appointment of George Lowe. We hurried to Washington to visit friends in Congress and education to take the pulse.

We continued to visit those outdoor facilities that remained open but the exciting, enthusiastic life had gone out of them. But by now the pattern had been set and recognized. We had learned most of what we had set out to learn.

In reflecting on the trip, the strongest feeling is that the trend to study outdoors is increasing, in spite of some suburban

schools dropping off due to the lack of funds. There is a healthy tendency to relate outdoor learning to indoor learning and to include all areas of the curriculum. The emphasis on individualized learning, discovery method and non-grading, have given new practicality to outdoor experience. The environmental crisis has finally awakened colleges to the need for relating theory to practice, and to the necessity of crossing departmental lines to study environmental problems.

Yes, outdoor education, environmental education, environmental studies or whatever the current name, is very much part of the American school scene. It has lagged in some sections but it has mushroomed excitingly in others. There are many school districts and colleges quietly giving outdoor learning with little or no national recognition. We turned them up everywhere. No thought of lauding themselves, just a deep desire to teach the children in the way they can learn best.

If I ever feel my interest in teaching start to ebb, I have positive therapy for it. I'll head for the nearest outdoor school and watch the face of a youngster while he is making a discovery.